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# Opus Dei Prelate's Pastoral Visit to the Philippines

Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, met with more than 10,000 members of Opus Dei, their families and friends at an hour-long get-together at the SMX Convention Center on July 29. He had arrived from Sydney on July 27 for a five-day pastoral visit to the Philippines.

08/03/2008

In his opening remarks, Bishop Echevarría encouraged those attending to value their status as children of God. He said that if Opus Dei is now spread all over the world, reaching lands as far as the Philippines, it was because the founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá, trusted completely in his Father God's strength to assist him in carrying out that mission.

He commented on the day's Gospel, which centered on Martha and Mary, who received Jesus in their house in Bethany. Through prayer and an upright life, each of us can make our soul a Bethany, where Christ is always welcome, the Prelate said. He advised families to try to convert their homes into that home in Bethany.

Bishop Echevarría asked the audience to pray for the Pope every day and to support him in carrying

the burden of the Church and humanity. He also asked the people to pray for all the sick in their family, in the Philippines and in the world.

Some children came up the stage to give the Prelate gifts and the Philippine Madrigal singers sang “A Los Arboles Altos,” a song that St. Josemaría loved. Commenting on a portion of the lyrics - “not having a divided heart” – Bishop Echevarría encouraged the people to love God with an undivided heart and to live their lives as Christians not only on Sunday but every day. He cited Martha again as one with an undivided heart because she did her work for Christ.

In answer to a question from a young girl who just came back from the World Youth Day in Sydney, Bishop Echevarría talked of the Filipinos’ role, as the only predominantly Catholic country in Asia, to spread

the faith to all places in the region. The foremost means to achieve this is prayer, which is within everyone's reach, he said. He advised everyone to read - and to tell their friends to read - the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a way to strengthen their faith.

A teacher from Dualtech Training Center thanked the Prelate for his greetings on their 25th anniversary. He recently lost his wife to illness and asked for advice on how to fulfill his new role as both father and mother to his two young children. Bishop Echevarría told him that St. Josemaría would advise widows to turn to St. Joseph to ask for help on how to play the role of father to their children. The Prelate advised the young father to turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary to ask advice on how to play the role of mother to his children. He advised him to love

them very much and give them good example.

A young lady asked about how their team could get people to collaborate in their project of character formation of young people. Bishop Echevarría responded by acknowledging the importance of their work to give dignity to women, men, marriage, family, sex and life. To get the collaboration of others, he advised them to place prayer above all, then to ask people for support, with confidence that they were doing a good thing.

His final message was an exhortation to take care of one's sacramental life, particularly Confession and Holy Communion. Confession gives us the strength to overcome our weaknesses and gives us peace, he said. He commended the custom of having perpetual adoration chapels and recommended prayer before the

Blessed Sacrament. Corollary to that he emphasized the importance of charity and knowing how to forgive others. When one rejects rancor and resentment, he will have peace in his soul, in his family and in his friendships, he said.

The Prelate ended the get-together asking the people to pray for the expansion of Opus Dei. He urged the crowd to pray for many young people to answer God's call to dedicate their lives for the service of Christ's kingdom.

Bishop Echevarría had smaller meetings with young people and those who attend the various activities of Opus Dei. After the audience at the SMX Hall, he met with a group of bishops and priests.

The Prelate's next stop after the Philippines is Singapore, then Mumbai in India, before returning to Rome.

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